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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000091

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SUBJECT: TENSIONS RISE AND ABATE BETWEEN BASRAH'S PC AND ISF

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell Howard, A/Director, Regional Embassy Office - Basrah, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Members of Basrah's Provincial Council (PC), led by the Fadhila Party, attempted to "vote out" Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) commander LTG Mohan Hafith Fahad and Provincial Director of Police (PDOP) MG Jalil Khalaf Shueil at a September 22 "emergency session." Both officers left before the meeting began, objecting to the media's presence. The next day, PC members said they were assuming responsibility for Basrah's security. National Security Minister Shirwan al-Wa'eli, said the government supported Mohan and Jalil and only Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki could dismiss them. Jalil reinforced that message to the media on September 24. For now, the Council appears to have backed off; tensions were building for months and the episode highlights problems in Iraq's federal system.  
End Summary.

¶12. (C) On 22 September, Basrah's PC held an emergency session to discuss the deteriorating security situation with PDOP MG Jalil and Security Chief LTG Mohan. Relations between Mohan/Jalil and the PC quickly deteriorated when Iraqi Police (IP) officers (reportedly associated with Fadhila) refused to stand up for Jalil and Mohan, infuriating both officers. Mohan also hotly objected to the media's presence at the invitation of the PC; Mohan and Jalil left before the session began.

¶13. (C) Most of the PC members came from Fadhila and the Iraqi National Accord, but PC Chairman Mohammed al-Obadi (Dawa) was also present. With only 18-19 of the 41 members present, they still lacked a quorum. At the meeting, the PC issued a report critical of Mohan and Jalil's failure to enforce Basrah's security and voted: 1) to dismiss Jalil as the PDOP; and 2) "no-confidence" in Mohan's Basrah Operations Center (BOC) and not to renew Mohan's three month-long term (already expired) as ISF chief. One PC member at the meeting told us they intended to write a letter to the central government nominating three individuals as Jalil's replacement. Finally, we heard that the PC was also considering establishing a new security committee led by Jalil's pro-PC and newly appointed deputy, Mohammed al-Ali and other pro-PC police officers.

¶14. (C) Both sides held competing press conferences October 23. The PC announced at its event that Jalil should be replaced by a Basrawi, that the ISF was unable to provide adequate security, and that the PC was taking control of Basrah's security

portfolio. On the other side, visiting Minister of State for National Security Shirwan al-Wa'eli told reporters at a press event in the BOC that Mohan and Jalil were fully supported in their duties by the central government, that he was speaking on behalf of PM Maliki, and only Maliki could dismiss Mohan or Jalil.

¶ 15. (C) To make the central government's position fully understood, Jalil told us that he was instructed by the PM's office and Interior Minister Jawad Karim al-Bulani to hold another press event September 24. Jalil shifted the blame for Basrah's security to the political parties by telling reporters: that the IP was infiltrated by party militias; that 250 IP vehicles were out of his control because they were being used by the parties; that officers were doing party business rather than their duties; and that parties were pushing their nominees for IP positions. He also explained that the PC had no authority to dismiss him; that authority rested with PM Maliki, who appointed him and Mohan under an emergency security act.

¶ 16. (C) For now, the PC appears to accept the GOI's primacy for Basrah's security and has backed off. During the PC's regular meeting on September 26, security issues were placed at the bottom of the agenda and were not discussed. Nor has the PC sent the aforementioned letter, discussed a new PC-friendly security committee any further, or held any press events to counter the central government's position. The best indicator, however, was Mohan's September 27 dismissal of the pro-PC DPDOP al-Ali, which elicited no response from the PC.

¶ 17. (C) Comment: Tensions between Mohan/Jalil and the PC have been rising for the last two months and finally came to a head. The PC's invitation of the media was sheer political theater designed to ambush both officers who are viewed as a threat to the political parties' stranglehold over the ISF. Additionally, the Chairman was upset with the ISF's slow reaction to his car being stolen in the summer; many members are angry with Jalil's decision to reduce the number of policemen acting as their

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bodyguards; members are angry that neither Mohan or Jalil consult them on security issues; and the Council is frustrated that Basrawis are blaming them for the deteriorating security despite the PC not having authority over the police.

¶ 18. (C) This episode also illustrates some of the tensions in Iraq's federal system. One PC member, who participated in the vote against Jalil, said that the PC disagrees with the central government's control over the IP, which is a provincial matter. As he put it, "The Council wants the central government to respect us," and "the Council was asserting its equality, not its subservience to Baghdad." While CPA 71 allows Councils to remove a police chief with a 2/3 majority (something they did not achieve), the Council nevertheless misunderstood or ignored the fact that they do not nominate replacements and that the province still has not been turned over to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). The passage of the Provincial Powers Act will be a step forward in clarifying some of the vagaries in the CPA orders. End Comment.

HOWARD